

29 March 1986

BERGER, David

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE 2

K'S NEWS FROM

Inside Washington

Senate Intelligence Chief Swamped by Troubles

If David Durenberger (R.-Minn.) were an employee of the Central Intelligence Agency, the Pentagon or a U.S. defense contractor, would he be cleared for access to top-secret information?

No, a senior Administration intelligence expert has told the *Washington Times*. But because Durenberger is a U.S. senator and chairman of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, he has access to some of the most sensitive secrets in the U.S. government.

"The Durenberger problem," about which the Capital has been buzzing for months, finally hit Washington's front pages two weeks ago. In a two-part series, *Times* reporters George Archibald and Bill Gertz pictured a committee chairman whose "tortuous and tangled private life has seriously affected his ability to lead" the vital committee.

And that committee has been wracked by controversy in the 14 months Durenberger has been chairman. Perhaps by coincidence, that has been a personally wrenching period for the senator. His marriage hit the rocks, and two sons were heavily involved in drugs. He had a widely publicized affair with a Senate staffer, entered psychiatric counseling and moved into a religious fellowship house where he now resides.

As chairman of the Intelligence Committee, Durenberger has been a major impediment to Administration initiatives around the globe. He has led the fight against covert aid to anti-Communist guerrillas in Nicaragua, Afghanistan and Angola, feuded openly with CIA Director William Casey and presided over a committee that has been a fount of damaging leaks.

Federal guidelines, which apply only to executive branch employees but not to members of Congress or their staffs, normally would disqualify an individual from working in a security-sensitive area if he is believed to be mentally unstable, according to George Woloshyn, an associate director of the Office of Personnel Management, who is responsible for overseeing federal background investigations.

"Basically, a person who is psychologically unbalanced... is not fully in control of his faculties," Woloshyn told the *Times*.

A senior intelligence official said that highest-level security clearances could be withdrawn from individuals whose personal problems included extra-marital affairs, separation or divorce, psychiatric care or unorthodox social behavior, then added:

"Durenberger's case easily meets the standards for which a security clearance would be revoked, at least until his problems are resolved."

Durenberger's closest confidant on the committee, staff director Bernard McMahon, a protege of former CIA Director Stansfield Turner, said he was unsure if the senator's personal problems have intruded on the committee's work.

"I don't know whether it's affected him or not," McMahon said. "I'm just saying that as far as the way this committee functions, I don't see any difference."

But intelligence community officials believe that as a result of his personal crisis, Durenberger has given more and more responsibility to McMahon. "Bernie sets the agenda," says one intelligence official.

And that agenda is consistently hostile to Administration plans. Several former committee staffers said McMahon placed a former Berkeley, Calif., "radical" in charge of the committee's covert action section.

And two GOP Senate members—Chic Hecht (Nev.) and Frank Murkowski (Alaska)—complain that the committee has been restructured to prevent them from being adequately informed.

Adds Sen. Malcolm Wallop (R.-Wyo.), who spent eight years on the committee, the maximum allowed by law:

"There is a great need for experience and continuity. There are too many people, too many leaks, too much involvement, too much turnover on staff, and no real appraisal of what it is that we seek to achieve in oversight."

Durenberger's personal problems have been the subject of Washington gossip for more than a year. His marriage broke up and the affair with his secretary, Mary E. Feldmann, became widely known.

That relationship apparently ended about eight months ago when Feldmann and Durenberger had a boisterous public encounter at Washington's National Airport. As the *St. Paul Pioneer Press and Dispatch* reported last month:

"Durenberger was preparing to board a flight to Minnesota when the woman loudly accosted him. According to several accounts, she accused Durenberger of ruining her life, and the contents of her purse were scattered after she swung it or threw it at the senator."

Continued

According to Doug Coe, who runs the fellowship house where Durenberger is now living, the senator's main problem is "alienation." But Durenberger is not alone.

"The big problem in the world is alienation," says Coe. "Alienation of the rich and poor, East and West, black and white, racial, mothers and fathers, children and parents. All of the war machine of this country is built because of alienation."

Coe says he's hopeful Durenberger will solve his problems. Meanwhile, the Minnesota senator continues as chairman of the Intelligence Committee in increasingly erratic fashion.